

Martin Asbury Green House
(Belmar Hotel)
1501 4th Avenue
Fourth Ward Neighborhood
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5844

HABS
PA,
7-ALTO,
52-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MARTIN ASBURY GREEN HOUSE
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Location: 1501 4th Avenue

Date of Erection: 1882

Description: This two-and-one-half-story, brick-veneered, frame hotel incorporates a succession of additions and materials. A three-bay dwelling with side-gable roof and enclosed front porch faces 4th Avenue. The first addition immediately behind but connected to the first section also has a side gable roof with a small hay dormer. It is also two-and-a-half stories and is flush with the street side of the front section.

Behind the first two sections is a two-story addition with a storefront entrance on 15th Street. Although this addition is faced with brownstone on the street side, the balance is concrete block that has been covered with stucco. A one-story addition at the extreme rear is concrete block and completed the dimensions that give the structure its L shape. While residential in scale, the multiple additions of this single-family dwelling-turned-botel cause it to ramble. Other features of note include a two-story protruding bay with brackets, a large shed dormer at the front, and a double front gable dormer.

History: Martin Asbury Green, a superintendent at the Altoona car works of the PRR, had the front portion of the current structure built as his residence in 1882. The house was built on a half-lot deeded to his wife, Leah, by Elizabeth Dey in 1880. The widow Dey lived in a small, two-story frame dwelling on the southwest side of the lot. She subsequently died intestate and the remainder of the lot, 22' x 120', was sold by her heirs to Green in September 1888. Green apparently built at least some of the added portion at that time as his tax value for the property jumped from \$600 in 1888 to \$3,000 in 1889.

Thomas K. Maher, secretary and treasurer of the East End Coal Company, purchased the brick house on the corner in August 1898 after Green had "removed to Philadelphia, PA." Maher was assessed \$4,000 for one lot and house in 1901.

H. O. McGough purchased the entire lot with dwelling in July 1903 from Maher, who must also have removed to another place as his name was dropped from the city directory. McGough immediately made improvements that added \$500 to the \$4,500 tax value he was originally assessed for his property. Mr. McGough established the property as a botel at that time and he is listed as proprietor of the Belmar House in the 1904 city directory.

This was the beginning of the McGough family's long association as owners and proprietors of the Belmar Hotel. H. O., whose previous occupation had been travel agent, was succeeded in 1906 by Silas McGough, an agent for Prudential Insurance. Elmer McGough took over in 1919. C. Donald apparently assumed the position in the 1930s and remained as proprietor until the family's involvement ended in the mid-1960s. Zoe McGough, a public school teacher, who maintained the longest running residence at No. 1501, was first listed as boarding there in the 1904 city directory. She began her career as a grade school teacher at Penn School where she taught from 1917 until she transferred to the recently completed Roosevelt Junior High School in 1927. Apparently retired from teaching, the 1961 city directory lists her as a waitress at the Belmar. Zoe McGough sold the Belmar to experienced restaurateurs, Francis Gehl (The Dutch Kitchen) and Carl Grieco (Trianon Grill) in 1964.

The most recent owners, Alfred and Barbara Mignogna, purchased the property in 1984. They are continuing the tradition of the Belmar Hotel and have undertaken some restoration of it.

Sources: Maps: 1882, 1888, 1894, 1909. City directories. Tax assessment records. Deed books: 32/340-44, 42/289, 45/217-219, 71/52, 122/210, 119/349, 143/8, 242/582, 292/84, 819/353, 1099/572.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The

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project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. Overviews of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and the fourth ward neighborhood (HABS No. PA-5786) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Nancy Spiegel in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Spiegel's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.